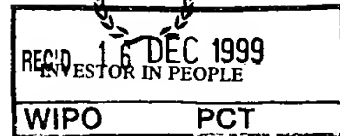




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Signed

Andrew Gorse

Dated

2 December 1999

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The Patent Office

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1. Your reference

15321 MdH

2. Patent application number

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9827360.0

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)

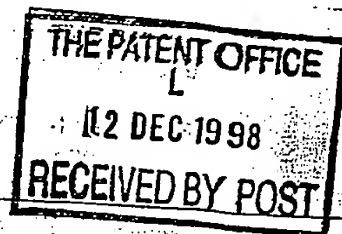
AEA Technology plc
329 Harwell
Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 0RA
United Kingdom

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

6969372004

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

England and Wales



4. Title of the invention

Process and Apparatus for Irradiating
Fluids

5. Name of your agent (if you have one)

Peter Turquand Mansfield

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode)

AEA Technology plc
Patents Department, 329 Harwell
Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 0RA

2410004

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Country

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Number of earlier application

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- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
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Patent

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Continuation sheets of this form	7
Description	2
Claim(s)	1
Abstract	1 + 1 (circled)
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Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77)

Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77) 1

Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77)

Any other documents (please specify)

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Date

09.12.98

M.J. LOFTING (On behalf of AEA Technology plc by virtue of a Power of Attorney dated 26th March 1996)

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

01235 432037 Mrs P A Stewart

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Process and Apparatus for Irradiating Fluids

The present invention relates to a process and an apparatus for subjecting fluids to irradiation by high intensity ultrasound.

If a liquid is subjected to a high ultrasonic intensity, that is to say an intensity greater than about 0.3 W/cm^2 at a frequency typically in the range 10 kHz to 100 kHz, then there is a significant deposition of energy into the liquid through attenuation and non-linear effects. This may lead to physical changes (for example streaming, mixing, or emulsification) or to chemical changes, and the present invention is principally concerned with the latter, which may be referred to as sonochemistry. The most significant sonochemical effects are usually associated with cavitation in the liquid, especially transient vaporous cavitation, which typically only occurs at an ultrasonic intensity above a threshold which is typically above 0.3 W/cm^2 and is different for different liquids.

An apparatus for subjecting a liquid to a very high intensity is described in GB 2 243 092 B (UKAEA), in which a transducer is attached to one end of a tapered resonant coupler, the coupler having a nodal flange; this flange is attached to a sleeve projecting from the wall of a pipe containing the liquid, and the space around the sides and end of the coupler within the sleeve is filled with a coupling liquid such as olive oil. The use of such a nodal flange mounting enables a transducer of higher power to be used, but the apparatus is somewhat complex. It has also been suggested, for example in US 4 433 916

(Hall), to attach a plurality of acoustic transducers directly to the wall of a cylindrical vessel containing a fluid, with a specified phase difference between the acoustic signals applied to adjacent transducers.

5 Similarly, US 4 369 100 (Sawyer) describes attaching ultrasonic transducers to the outer wall of an annular duct so that both the inner and outer walls are set in resonance. And US 2 578 505 (Carlin) also describes a pipe with several transducers attached to the surface

10 arranged in one or more circumferential rings.

According to the present invention there is provided an apparatus for subjecting a fluid to irradiation by high intensity ultrasound, the apparatus comprising a

15 plurality of ultrasonic transducers attached to a wall of a vessel, each transducer radiating no more than 3 W/cm^2 , the transducers being sufficiently close to each other, and the number of transducers being sufficiently high, that the power dissipation within the vessel is at least

20 25 W/litre .

The values of power given here are those of the electrical power delivered to the transducer or the transducers, as this is relatively easy to determine.

25 There will inevitably be losses in converting electrical to acoustic power, and in transmitting the acoustic power from the transducer into the fluid within the vessel, but these are difficult to assess accurately. The transducer typically is at least 90% efficient in converting

30 electrical to acoustic power.

The power radiated by each transducer may for example be in the range $1\text{-}2 \text{ W/cm}^2$. This is a similar

power intensity to that used in ultrasonic cleaning baths, and is above the threshold required to achieve cavitation. The resonant ultrasonic coupler with a nodal flange (as described in GB 2 243 092 B) can achieve
5 significantly higher power intensities, for example radiating more than 10 W/cm^2 , but the lower intensity ultrasound generated by the present invention can propagate much further through a liquid, and the stresses in the transducers are much less.

10

Preferably the number of transducers, the power of the transducers, and the volume of the vessel are such that the power density is between 40 and 80 W/litre, more preferably between 60 and 70 W/litre. Although this does
15 not produce such high power densities as can be achieved with an irradiator as described in GB 2 243 092 (UKAEA), it enables a larger volume to be irradiated and with greater uniformity, at sufficient intensity to cause cavitation; this is partly because very high cavitation
20 levels near the vessel wall can have the effect of shielding parts of the fluid further from the wall.

In a preferred embodiment the vessel is double walled, the transducers being attached to the outer wall,
25 the fluid to be treated being enclosed within the inner wall, and the space between the two walls being filled by a low attenuation buffer liquid whose cavitation threshold is above that of the liquid to be treated.

30 The width of the gap between the two walls is desirably equal to a quarter wavelength in the coupling liquid (which for a frequency of 20 kHz would be about 18 mm, or an odd-numbered multiple of that distance, to optimise the matching of impedance.

In one embodiment some of the transducers are energized at one frequency and other transducers at a different frequency, for example at 20 kHz and at 40 kHz.

5 This can be very effective at causing cavitation and energy deposition within a fluid.

The invention will now be further and more particularly described, by way of example only, and with
10 reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 shows a longitudinal sectional view through an irradiator apparatus;

15 Figure 2 shows a longitudinal sectional view through an alternative irradiator apparatus; and

Figure 3 shows a sectional view on the line 3-3 of figure 2.

20

Referring to figure 1 an irradiator 10 incorporates a stainless-steel duct 12 of internal diameter 0.31 m and of wall thickness 2 mm. To the outside of the wall are attached sixty transducer modules 14 closely packed in a
25 square array. Each transducer module 14 comprises a 50 W piezoelectric transducer 16 which resonates at 20 kHz, attached to a conically flared titanium coupling block 18 by which it is connected to the wall, the wider end of each block being of diameter 63 mm. The transducers
30 modules 14 are arranged in five circumferential rings each of twelve modules 14, the centres of the coupling blocks 18 being on a square pitch of 82 mm. The irradiator 10 also incorporates five signal generators 20 (only one is shown) each of which drives all the

transducers 16 in a ring. All the transducers 16 are activated at 20 kHz.

In use of the irradiator 10, a liquid is caused to
5 flow through the duct 12 and each transducer 16
activated. Each transducer 16 radiates 50 watts over a
circle of diameter 63 mm, that is an intensity of 1.6
W/cm². The energy from all the transducers 16 is
dissipated over the cylindrical volume of the duct 12,
10 that is to say over a volume of about 31 litres (that is
the volume enclosed by the array of transducer modules
14), so the power density is about 97 W/litre, or about
80 W/litre if the ultrasonic irradiation is also
effective 40 mm beyond each end of the array of
15 transducer modules 14.

In one modification, three of the rings of
transducers 16 are as described above, while the other
two rings resonate at 40 kHz and are driven at that
20 frequency (the rings being of alternate frequency along
the duct 12). The power intensity and power density are
as described earlier, but the fluid is consequently
exposed simultaneously to two different frequencies
generating cavitation. This can produce more effective
25 sonochemical results.

Referring now to figures 2 and 3 there is shown an
alternative irradiator 30 which has many features in
common with that of figure 1. The irradiator 30 includes
30 a generally cylindrical duct 32 of polytetrafluoro-
ethylene (PTFE) of internal diameter 0.31 m and of wall
thickness 3 mm, which tapers at each end down to an
internal diameter of 0.10 m and a wall thickness of 6 mm
provided with a flange 33 for connection to other process

ducts (not shown), and has a sealed joint 34 for inspection or cleaning purposes. Around the outside of the duct 32 is a concentric stainless-steel steel tube 35 of wall thickness 1 mm and of external diameter 0.354 m, such that there is a gap 36 of width 18 mm between the duct 32 and the tube 35. Sixty transducer modules 14 are attached to the outer surface of the tube 35 in a rectangular array forming five rings of twelve, the spacing between the centres of the coupling blocks 18 being 82 mm parallel to the longitudinal axis of the tube 35 and 92.7 mm circumferentially. The array of transducers 14 is enclosed by an acoustic shield 38. A coupling liquid such as olive oil 40 is used to fill the gap 36 and is re-circulated from a reservoir 42 by a pump 44. This coupling liquid has a higher threshold for cavitation than water, and has an impedance which is between that of the titanium coupling block 18 and that of the fluid within the duct 32 (typically mainly water, or an industrial solvent); at a frequency of 20 kHz the wavelength of the sound in this oil is 72 mm, so that the gap 36 is of width equal to a quarter of the wavelength.

In use of the irradiator 30, a liquid is caused to flow through the duct 32 and each transducer 16 is activated by a power supply (not shown) at 20 kHz. The dissipated power intensity and power density are as described in relation to figure 1. The impedance matching provided by the oil in the gap 36 allows more of the applied power to enter the fluid within the duct 32 while reducing erosion at the inner, irradiating, surface of the tube 35.

It will be appreciated that the power intensity in the irradiator 30 may be increased by increasing the

numbers of transducer modules 14 in each ring. For
example there might be sixteen transducer modules 14 in
each ring, if the coupling blocks 18 were arranged on a
circumferential spacing of 69.5 mm. This would increase
5 both the power density and the power intensity by 33
percent. It will also be appreciated that the duct 32
can be of any material suited to the liquid being
processed, and that it may form part of a pressure
vessel. It will also be appreciated that the duct 12 or
10 32 need not be cylindrical but might for example be of
square cross-section.

Claims

1. An apparatus for subjecting a fluid to irradiation by high intensity ultrasound, the apparatus comprising a plurality of ultrasonic transducers attached to a wall of a vessel, each transducer radiating no more than 3 W/cm^2 , the transducers being sufficiently close to each other, and the number of transducers being sufficiently high, that the power dissipation within the vessel is at least 25 W/litre.
2. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the power radiated by each transducer is in the range $1-2 \text{ W/cm}^2$.
3. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the number of transducers, the power of the transducers, and the volume of the vessel are such that the power density is between 40 and 80 W/litre.
4. An apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the vessel is double walled, the transducers being attached to the outer wall, the fluid to be treated is enclosed within the inner wall, and the space between the two walls is filled by a low attenuation buffer liquid whose cavitation threshold is above that of the liquid to be treated.
5. An apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein some of the transducers are energized at one frequency and other transducers at a different frequency.

6. An apparatus for subjecting a fluid to irradiation
by high intensity ultrasound substantially as
hereinbefore described, with reference to, and as shown
in figure 1, or figure 2 and figure 3, of the
5 accompanying drawings.

10

15321 MdH

P.T. Mansfield
Chartered Patent Agent
Agent for the Applicants

Abstract

Process and Apparatus for Irradiating Fluids

5 Fluids in a vessel are subjected to a high
ultrasonic intensity, by means of several ultrasonic
transducers attached to a wall of the vessel, each
transducer radiating no more than 3 W/cm^2 , the
transducers being sufficiently close to each other, and
10 the number of transducers being sufficiently high, that
the power dissipation within the vessel is at least 25
W/litre. The number of transducers, the power of the
transducers, and the volume of the vessel may be such
that the power density is between 40 and 80 W/litre. The
15 vessel may be double walled, and the space between the
two walls be filled by a low attenuation buffer liquid
whose cavitation threshold is above that of the liquid to
be treated.

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Fig. 1

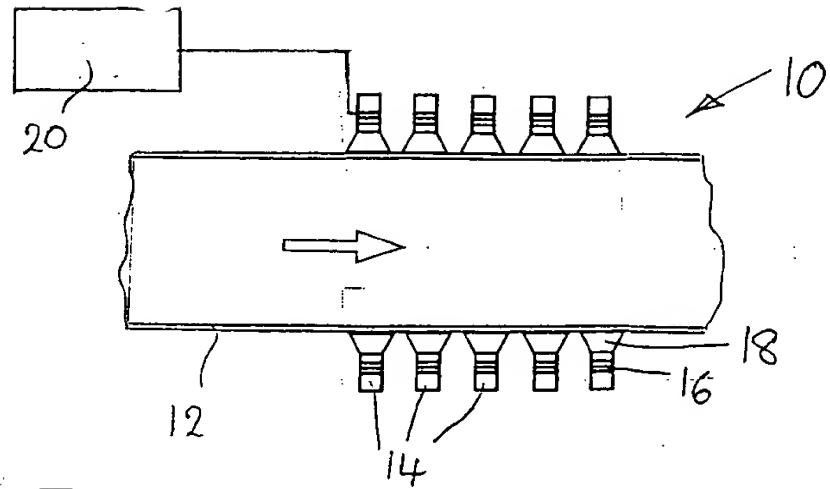


Fig. 2

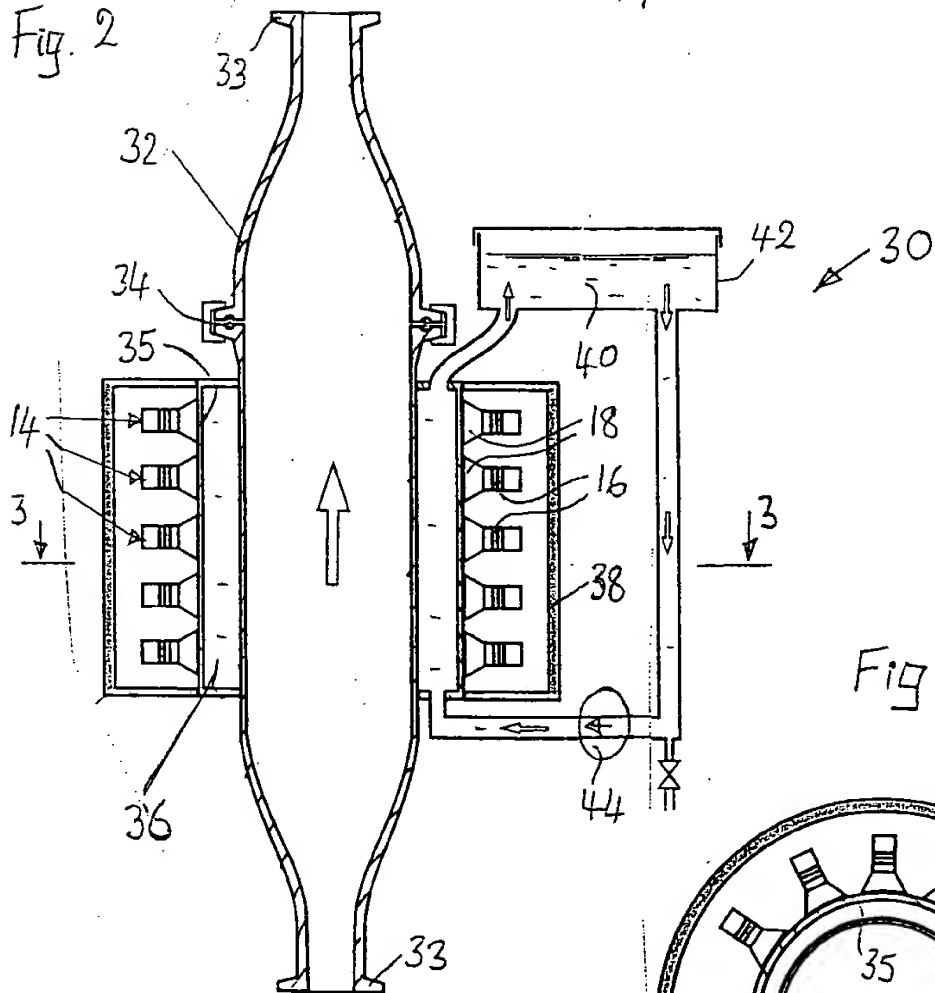


Fig. 3

